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THE
SELECTED POEMS
OF
KENNETH PATCHEN

The New Classics

A NEW DIRECTIONS BOOK

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*The sea is awash with roses O they blow
Upon the land*

*The still hills fill with their scent
O the hills flow on their sweetness
As on God's hand*

*O love, it is so little we know of pleasure
Pleasure that lasts as the snow*

*But the sea is awash with roses O they blow
Upon the land*

For Miriam

*Do I not deal with angels
When her lips I touch*

*So gentle, so warm and sweet—falsity
Has no sight of her
O the world is a place of veils and roses
When she is there*

*I am come to her wonder
Like a boy finding a star in a haymow
And there is nothing cruel or mad or evil
Anywhere*

NOTE

THE poems in this selection are taken from the following volumes and were chosen by the publisher, not the author. The provenance of each poem is listed in the table of contents by number.

1. BEFORE THE BRAVE (1936)
2. FIRST WILL & TESTAMENT (1939)
3. THE DARK KINGDOM (1942)
4. THE TEETH OF THE LION (1942)
5. CLOTH OF THE TEMPEST (1943)
6. AN ASTONISHED EYE LOOKS OUT OF THE AIR (1945)

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AS SHE WAS THUS ALONE IN THE CLEAR MOON-LIGHT, standing between rock and sky, and scarcely seeming to touch the earth, her dark locks and loose garments scattered by the wind, she looked like some giant spirit of the older time, preparing to ascend into the mighty cloud which singly hung from this poor heaven

so when she lay beside me
sleep's town went round her
and wondering children pressed against the high windows
of the room where we had been

so when she lay beside me
a voice, reminded of an old fashion:

 'What are they saying?
 of the planets and the turtles?
 of the woodsman and the bee?'

but we were too proud to answer, too tired to care about designs

 'of tents and books and swords and birds'

thus does the circle pull upon itself
and all the gadding angels draw us in

until I can join her in that soft town where the bells
split apples on their tongues
and bring sleep down like a fish's shadow.

AND WHAT WITH THE BLUNDERS, what with the real humor of the address, the end is sure to be attained, that of roarous fun in the roused hamlet or mountain village which pour forth their whole population in a swarm round the

*amorous orator, down to the baby that can but just tottle and
the curs that join in the clamor, mad with ecstasy at the nov-
elty of some noise besides that of trees and the horrible clamor
of the grass*

We talked of things but all the time we wanted each other
and finally we were silent and I knelt above your body

a closing of eyes
and falling unfalteringly
over a warm pure country and something crying

when I was a child things being hurt made me sorry
for them but it seemed the way men and women did
and we had not made the world

coming into it crying
(I wanted so not to hurt you)
and going out of it like a sudden pouring of salt

later, being tired and overflowing with tenderness
girl's body to boy's body lying there and wondering what it
had been

we got to our feet very quietly so that they would not waken
but we felt their *shy sorrowful look on us as we left them alone*
there

* * * * *

All things are one thing to the earth
rayless as a blind leper Blake lies with everyman
and the fat lord sleeps beside his bastard at last
and it doesn't matter, it doesn't mean what we think it does
for we two will never lie there

we shall not be there when death reaches out his sparkling hands

there are so many little dyings that it doesn't matter which of them is death.

These Unreturning Destinies

The columns glow faintly
Under this comfortable moon.
In their wisdom pass
The cathedral airs of heaven.
Here night's immortal toad sings,
Its black throat puffed with mockery
Of all narrow determinations.
 Old dancers sleep
In feathery cribs, their green rhythm stilled
By the swaying of stone bells
In churches of water.
The figure of a man appears
For a moment on the steps of the temple,
Then sorrowfully withdraws to his place
In the attended shadow.
Before and around him stand
The brick and steel forests of the dead city,
And perched in the cold branches.
The birds of madness clamor.
Now is the hour of silence come.
The magnificent heads shine faintly
Upon the roads of the fish,
And are gone O they are gathered

Unto the thoughtful breast of victory.
Destiny and youth sleep in the lands
Of the walking sword.
Each one is larger than his other.
In their alternate life men hold
Untarnishing peaks.
On what man is write
Other landscapes, other fairer caverns,
Other more welcome-radiant islands
That peacefully float on his luminous waters.



The columns of death glow faintly white
Within the forests of this destroying planet.
Here gleeful beasts track each other
Through lanes of winter and rotting heroes.

Let Us Have Madness

Let us have madness openly, O men
Of my generation. Let us follow
The footsteps of this slaughtered age:
See it trail across Time's dim land
Into the closed house of eternity
With the noise that dying has,
With the face that dead things wear—
nor ever say

We wanted more; we looked to find
An open door, an utter deed of love,

Transforming day's evil darkness;
but
We found extended hell and fog
Upon the earth, and within the head
A rotting bog of lean huge graves.

We Leave You Pleasure

We leave you pleasure in the earth:
Burnt grass in the sun; waters'
Body, lovely in the waste of years,
Having no wings for us;
The stellar vast wonder in the sky; the furniture
Of Space shattered within the heart;
The cynical image of smoke curling up
From homes we never had.

We leave you seas upon parched shores;
The iron twist in vines
Over our graves: the deafening sound
Of silence over everything.
Turn from the rebel body: here;
The crude question of the grass;
The spirit's face bleary
With sightlessness. It is enough.
We leave you.

Do the Dead Know What Time It Is?

The old guy put down his beer.

Son, he said,

(and a girl came over to the table where we were:
asked us by Jack Christ to buy her a drink.)

Son, I am going to tell you something

The like of which nobody ever was told.

(and the girl said, I've got nothing on tonight;
how about you and me going to your place?)

I am going to tell you the story of my mother's
Meeting with God.

(and I whispered to the girl: I don't have a room,
but maybe. . .)

She walked up to where the top of the world is

And He came right up to her and said

So at last you've come home.

(but maybe what?

I thought I'd like to stay here and talk to you.)

My mother started to cry and God

Put His arms around her.

(about what?

Oh, just talk . . . we'll find something.)

She said it was like a fog coming over her face

And light was everywhere and a soft voice saying

You can stop crying now.

(what can we talk about that will take all night?
and I said that I didn't know.)

You can stop crying now.

'The Snow Is Deep on the Ground'

The snow is deep on the ground.
Always the light falls
Softly down on the hair of my beloved.

This is a good world.
The war has failed.
God shall not forget us.
Who made the snow waits where love is.

Only a few go mad.
The sky moves in its whiteness
Like the withered hand of an old king.
God shall not forget us.
Who made the sky knows of our love.

The snow is beautiful on the ground.
And always the lights of heaven glow
Softly down on the hair of my beloved.

The Reason for Skylarks

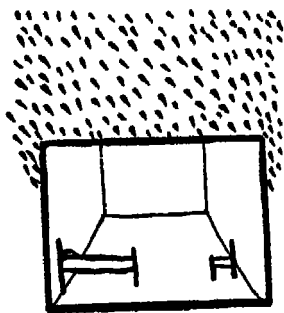
It was nearly morning when the giant
Reached the tree of children.
Their faces shone like white apples
On the cold dark branches
And their dresses and little coats
Made sodden gestures in the wind.

He did not laugh or weep or stamp
His heavy feet. He set to work at once
Lifting them tenderly down
Into a straw basket which was fixed
By a golden strap to his shoulder.
Only one did he drop—a soft pretty child
Whose hair was the color of watered milk.
She fell into the long grass
And he could not find her
Though he searched until his fingers
Bled and the full light came.

He shook his fist at the sky and called
God a bitter name.

But no answer was made and the giant
Got down on his knees before the tree
And putting his hands about the trunk
Shook
Until all the children had fallen
Into the grass. Then he pranced and stamped
Them to jelly. And still he felt no peace.
He took his half-full basket and set it afire,
Holding it by the handle until
Everything had been burned. He saw now
Two men on steaming horses approaching
From the direction of the world.
And taking a little silver flute
Out of his pocket he played tune
After tune until they came up to him.

She knows it's
raining and my
room is warm



but she is proud
and beautiful
and I have
no money

I Feel Drunk All the Time

Jesus it's beautiful!
Great mother of big apples it is a pretty
World!

You're a bastard Mr. Death
And I wish you didn't have no look-in here.

I don't know how the rest of you feel,
But I feel drunk all the time

And I wish to hell we didn't have to die.

O you're a merry bastard Mr. Death
And I wish you didn't have no hand in this game
Because it's too damn beautiful for anybody to die.

I DON'T WANT TO STARTLE YOU but they are going to kill most of us

I knew the General only by name of course.
I said Wartface what have you done with her?
I said You Dirtylouse tell me where she is now?
His duck-eyes shifted to the Guard. All right, Sam.
I saw a photograph of the old prick's wife on the desk;
Face smiling like a bag of money on a beggar's grave.
Who is that fat turd I said—he hit me with his jewelled fist.
While his man held me he put a lighted cigarette on my eyelid.
I smelt the burning flesh through his excellent perfume.
On the wall it said *Democracy must be saved at all costs.*
The floor was littered with letters of endorsement from lib-
erals

And intellectuals: "your high ideals," "liberty," "human justice."

Stalin's picture spotted between Hoover's and a group-shot of the DAR.

I brought my knee up suddenly and caught him in the nuts.
A little foam trickled from his flabby puss. All right, Sam.
They led me into a yard and through a city of iron cells.
I saw all the boys: Lenin, Trotsky, Nin, Pierce, Rosa Luxemburg. . .

Their eyes were confident, beautiful, unafraid. . . .

We came finally to an immense hall protected by barbed wire
And machineguns: Hitler, Benny Mussolini, Roosevelt and all
The big and little wigs were at table, F.D.'s arm around
Adolf,

Chiang Kai-shek's around the Pope, all laughing fit to kill.
As soon as a treaty was signed, out the window it went;
But how they fumbled at each other under the table!

I snatched up a menu:

Grilled Japanese Soldier On Toast

Fried Revolutionaries à la Dirty Joe

Roast Worker Free Style

Hamstrung Colonial Stew, British Special

Gassed Child's Breast, International Favorite

Wine list—Blood 1914, '15, '17, '23, '34, '36, '40 etc.

So much fresh meat I thought! A butchers' holiday. . .

The General paused to enjoy the floorshow:

On a raised platform little groups of people stood.

Flags told their nationality; orators told them what to do.

As the bands blared they rushed at each other with bayonet.

The dead and dying were dragged off and others brought on.

Sweat streamed from the orators; the musicians wobbled
crazily.

The Big Shots were mad with joy, juggling in their seats like monkeys.

And they never get wise the General said as we moved on.

Out in the air again. . . .

A line of petty officials and war-pimps waited before the door.

As we approached they drew aside respectfully to let the General in.

I heard a woman moaning and I knew what they wanted there.

Now do you know what we've done with her the General said.

To go mad or to die. . .

They forced me to watch as the General went up to her and

Her eyes were looking at me.

The Rites of Darkness

The sleds of the children

Move down the right slope.

To the left, hazed in the tumbling air,

A thousand lights smudge

Within the branches of the old forest,

Like colored moons in a well of milk.

The sleds of the children

Make no sound on the hard-packed snow.

Their bright cries are not heard

On that strange hill.

The youngest are wrapped

In cloth of gold, and their scarfs

Have been dipped in blood.

All the others, from the son

Of Tegos, who is the Bishop

Of Black Church—near Tarn,
On to the daughter of the least slut,
Are garbed in love's shining dress;
Naked little eels, they flash
Across the amazed ice.
And behind each sled
There trots a man with his sex
Held like a whip in his snaking hand.

But no one sees the giant horse
That climbs the steps which stretch forth
Between the calling lights and that hill
Straight up to the throne of God.
He is taller than the highest tree
And his flanks steam under the cold moon.
The beat of his heart shakes the sky
And his reaching muzzle snuffles
At the most ancient star.



The innocent alone approach evil
Without fear; in their appointed flame
They acknowledge all living things.
The only evil is doubt; the only good
Is not death, but life. To be is to love.
This I thought as I stood while the snow
Fell in that bitter place, and the riders
Rode their motionless sleds into a nowhere
Of sleep. Ah, God, we can walk so easily,
Bed with women, do every business
That houses and roads are for, scratch
Our shanks and lug candles through

These caves; but, God, we can't believe,
We can't believe in anything.
Because nothing is pure enough.
Because nothing will ever happen
To make us good in our own sight.
Because nothing is evil enough.



I squat on my heels, raise my head
To the moon, and howl.
I dig my nails into my sides,
And laugh when the snow turns red.
As I bend to drink,
I laugh at everything that anyone loves.

All your damn horses climbing to heaven

'O Fiery River'

O fiery river
Flow out over the land.
Men have destroyed the roads of wonder,
And their cities squat like black toads
In the orchards of life.
Nothing is clean, or real, or as a girl,
Naked to love, or to be a man with.
The arts of this American land
Stink in the air of mountains;
What has made these men sick rats
That they find out every cheap hole?

How can these squeak of greatness?
Push your drugstore-culture into the sewer
With the rest of your creation.
The bell wasn't meant to toll for you.
Keep your filthy little hands off it.

O fiery river
Spread over this American land.
Drown out the falsity, the smug contempt
For what does not pay . . .
What would you pay Christ to die again?

The Origin of Baseball

Someone had been walking in and out
Of the world without coming
To much decision about anything.
The sun seemed too hot most of the time.
There weren't enough birds around
And the hills had a silly look
When he got on top of one.
The girls in heaven, however, thought
Nothing of asking to see his watch
Like you would want someone to tell
A joke—"Time," they'd say, "what's
That mean—time?", laughing with the edges
Of their white mouths, like a flutter of paper
In a madhouse. And he'd stumble over
General Sherman or Elizabeth B.
Browning, muttering, "Can't you keep

Your big wings out of the aisle?" But down
Again, there'd be millions of people without
Enough to eat and men with guns just
Standing there shooting each other.

So he wanted to throw something
And he picked up a baseball.

The Grand Palace of Versailles

An elephant made of cotton . . .
Towers of lace under which satin-heeled
Gentlemen sit, playing with the bustles
Of slightly desiccated Grandes Damns.
Good morning, Louis; it's a fine day
In the mirror.

A chaise longue carved
Out of the living body of a white leopard . . .
Spools of silk placed in buckets
Of gilt milk . . . A three-headed dancer
Prancing to the music of a little bell
Languidly swung by a Negro with a hairlip.
Two visiting kings having their canes reheaded,
While a painter to the court tints their eyebrows
With the juice of mildly sickening berries.
What does Salvador Ernst Matta, Louis?
It's a fine day in the mirror.

It must be amusing to be poor, n'est-ce pas?

Irkalla's White Caves

I believe that a young woman
Is standing in a circle of lions
On the other side of the sky.

In a little while I must carry her the flowers
Which only fade here; and she will not cry
If my hands are not very full.



Fiery antlers toss within the forests of heaven
And ocean's plaintive towns
Echo the tread of celestial feet.
O the beautiful eyes stare down . . .
What have we done that we are blessed?
What have we died that we hasten to God?



And all the animals are asleep again
In their separate caves.
Hairy bellies distended with their kill.
Culture blubbering in and out
Like the breath of a stranded fish.
Crucifixion in wax. The test-tube messiahs.
Immaculate fornication under the smoking walls
Of a dead world.

I dig for my death
in this thousand-watt dungheap.
There isn't even enough clean air

To die in.

O blood-bearded destroyer!

In other times . . .

(soundless barges float
down the rivers of death)

In another heart

These crimes may not flower . . .

What have we done that we are blessed?

What have we damned that we are blinded?



Now, with my seven-holed head open

On the air whence comes a fabulous mariner

To take his place among the spheres—

The air which is God

And the mariner who is sleep—I fold

Upon myself like a bird over flames. Then

All my nightbound juices sing. Snails

Pop out of unexpected places and the long

light lances of waterbolls plunge

into the green crotch of my native land.

Eyes peer out of the seaweed that gently sways

Above the towers and salt gates of a lost world.



On the other side of the sky

A young woman is standing

In a circle of lions—

The young woman who is dream

And the lions which are death.

We Must Be Slow

For you and I are bathed in silence:
Here where the country all about
Is quiet; asleep in the softness
Of this evening star, sparkling
On the wrist of night. The village lights,
Like ancient bards at prayer, come
Gently to us over fields of growing corn
And docile sheep. We'd like belonging
Here, where sleep is not of city-kind,
Where sleep is full and light and close
As outline of a leaf in glass of tea; but
Knowledge in the heart of each of us
Has painted rotten eyes within
The head: we have no choice: we see
All weeping things and gaudy days
Upon this humble earth, blending
Taxis' horns and giant despair
With every landscape, here, or anywhere.

The Wolf of Winter

The wolf of winter
Devours roads and towns
In his white hunger.

The wolf of winter
Sticks his paw into the city's rancid pot,
Wanly stirring its soup of whores and suicides.

O the wolf of winter
Crunches on the bones of the poor
In his chill white cave.

The wolf of winter . . .
The grim, the cold, the white
Beautiful winter wolf
That feeds on our world.

The Billion Freedoms

Yes, then, always, as the rain, a star,
Or snow, the snow, snow,
Faces in the village, many dead on the roads
Of Europe, guns, go, yell, fall, O wait, what
Does life do, I know, knew, go mad, life goes
Mad, as the gentle rain, run, as the cold death
Comes into, into you, into the
Star-being man, is it quiet, quiet in the ground,
I grin, gunned silly, noble, is it noble to be part
Of, of the lie, it is a lie, war is, war is a lie,
What else is war, war is also a lie, love is not
A lie, love is greater, O love is greater
Than, war, wake my brothers, love is not a lie,
Live, as the earth, as the, sun,
Stand in the beautiful, be, as the clean, full, fine,
Strong lives stood, hated, mocked, despised, drowned
In the sewers of poverty,
And in the sewers of the State, as Christ, was, for
He believed in life,

He believed in love, and in death, and war, and greed,
He did not believe, and any man who speaks
Of a Christian war, or of war as the savior
Of anything, that man is a liar, and
A, murderer, for no man can acquire position,
Or goods, or selfrighteousness
In a lie, except he be himself an enemy of truth,
And life, and God,
And a defiler in the temple of his kind, faces
In the villages of the world, millions dead
On the roads of Europe, what sin against reason
Is this, that they fought, fight, in a war
To save the evils
That cause war, for war is no evil
To those who have warred against the people,
And against truth, always, what crime
Against the soul of man is this, this fraud,
This mockery of life, that what is cheapest,
And dirtiest, and most debased, is thus smugly
Stamped on the forehead of, Christ, Who said,
Says, in the authority of God, thou shalt not
Kill, or take from another, O what are men
For, or God, now, as the light, and the good,
And the truth, and the love of one poor creature
For his fellow, fall, and the grandeur
Of mankind, like a blind snake,
Crawls, on its belly, into the slimy
Pit of oblivion, yes, then, always, as the rain,
A star, or as a fire burning forever in, all men.

Fall of the Evening Star

Speak softly; sun going down
Out of sight. Come near me now.

Dear dying fall of wings as birds
Complain against the gathering dark. . .

Exaggerate the green blood in grass;
The music of leaves scraping space;

Multiply the stillness by one sound;
By one syllable of your name. . .

And all that is little is soon giant,
All that is rare grows in common beauty

To rest with my mouth on your mouth
As somewhere a stars falls

And the earth takes it softly, in natural love. . .
Exactly as we take each other . . . and go to sleep.

The Fox

Because the snow is deep
Without spot that white falling through white air

Because she limps a little—bleeds
Where they shot her

Because hunters have guns
And dogs have hangmen's legs

Because I'd like to take her in my arms
And tend her wound

Because she can't afford to die
Killing the young in her belly

I don't know what to say of a soldier's dying
Because there are no proportions in death.

Instructions for Angels

Take the useful events
For your tall.
Red mouth.
Blue weather.
To hell with power and hate and war.

The mouth of a pretty girl . . .
The weather in the highest soul . . .
Put the tips of your fingers
On a baby man;
Teach him to be beautiful.
To hell with power and hate and war.

Tell God that we like
The rain, and snow, and flowers,
And trees, and all things gentle and clean

That have growth on the earth.
White winds.
Golden fields.
To hell with power and hate and war.

A Temple

To leave the earth was my wish, and no will
stayed my rising.
Early, before the sun had filled the roads with carts
conveying folk to weddings and to murders;
before men left their selves of sleep, to wander
in the dark of the world like whipped beasts.

I took no pack. I had no horse, no staff, no gun.
I got up a little way and something called me,
saying,
"Put your hand in mine. We will seek God together."
And I answered,
"It is your father who is lost, not mine."
Then the sky filled with tears of blood, and snakes sang.

*SHE HAD CONCEALED HIM IN A DEEP DARK CAVE,
hewn far in the rock, to which she alone knew the entrance
on the world, and so treacherous and uncertain was the de-
scent that the law-givers and the villagers passed over his head
in the clear fields above, content to allow him such safety as
he had*

Going to bed
and when we have done
Lying quietly together in the dark

Warm houses stand within us
Sleepy angels smile in doorways
Little jewelled horses jolt by without sound
Everyone is rich and no one has money
I can love you Thank God I can love you
All that can happen to us is not known to the guns

Are you awake darling?
Do not fall asleep yet
to sleep now would seem a way to die so easily
and death is something which poems must be about

but the way our bodies were wings
flying in and out of each other. . .

The Hangman's Great Hands

And all that is this day. . .
The boy with cap slung over what had been a face. . .
Somehow the cop will sleep tonight, will make love to his
wife. . .

*Anger won't help. I was born angry.
Angry that my father was being burnt alive in the mills;
Angry that none of us knew anything but filth and poverty.
Angry because I was that very one somebody was supposed
To be fighting for*

Turn him over; take a good look at his face. . .
Somebody is going to see that face for a long time.

I wash his hands that in the brightness they will shine.

We have a parent called the earth.
To be these buds and trees; this tameless bird
Within the ground; this season's act upon the fields of Man.
To be equal to the littlest thing alive,
While all the swarming stars move silent through
The merest flower . . . but the fog of guns. . .
The face with all the draining future left blank. . .
Those smug saints, whether of church or Stalin,
Can get off the back of my people, and stay off.
Somebody is supposed to be fighting for somebody. . .
And Lenin is terribly silent, terribly silent and dead.

November 1937

The Forms of Knowledge

We moved down the valley
Past the stalls where the sun horses
Champed their bits of gold; and whence
Night's murmuring rivers flow
Onto the world.

Her two legs were beautiful
When we paused on the green bed
And I lifted her down. She sobbed

Once, then her mouth bruised mine;
Her hands turned to fire. She made
Red flowers on my neck when
I took her.

At cloud level we ate,
The crumbs falling unheeded from our puffed lips. Below us
Stretched the unknown lands of sorrow.
Men had little wisdom there. They sat
In their filth like sick dogs, vomiting up
Their food. And they fought that nothing
Might be changed. In the image of God.



Now that we really see them, the other beings,
Our eyes are not strange.
Alive! standing just out of reach
Beyond where the dead cry.
So the challenge! So this destiny
Builds pleasure. My wish
Is gathered unto the silent breast. My gain
Is for all men. My eyes gleam steadily
Above this night.

The other creatures
Come to taste my will. I separate the seeing
From the thing seen: my eyes
Think the new islands. I have heard
The sound of immense wings
Beating over their unshadowed hills.
Not to be separated from my world . . . O walk
At my side on these endless heights.

Who will? O who will harry the dark
At the side of the damned . . .



Calling to each other across the graves,
The beautiful and strong whom
Horror eats, whose bones are already
Bleached in city deserts, whose stars
And moons bestride another world—
These, these few, these *holy*—
They are not drowned by the great white rains
Of this winter; they are not trampled
By the horses of murder and death;
Instead, they try to live above life,
As the birds above their flying,
As the dead beyond their dying.



Leviathan's scales sparkle in the heavens
And the whole fish of the universe
Turns on the enraptured spit of God.
Through the flames I can see the lowered faces
Of creatures that watch us in amused love.
We live on only one side of the world.



As we moved down the valley
The petals of the snowflower
Dropped gently on all that had been ugly
Anywhere on this principal star.

The Stars Go to Sleep so Peacefully

The stars go to sleep so peacefully . . .
Their high gentle eyes closing like white flowers
In a child's dream of paradise.

With the morning, in house after grim house,
In a haste of money, proper to kiss their war,
These noble little fools awake.

O the soul of the world is dead . . .
Truth rots in a bloody ditch;
And love is impaled on a million bayonets

But great God! the stars go to sleep so peacefully

The Character of Love Seen as a Search for the Lost

You, the woman; I, the man; this, the world:
And each is the work of all.

There is the muffled step in the snow; the stranger;
The crippled wren; the nun; the dancer; the Jesus-wing
Over the walkers in the village; and there are
Many beautiful arms about us and the things we know.

See how those stars tramp over heaven on their sticks
Of ancient light: with what simplicity that blue
Takes eternity into the quiet cave of God, where Caesar

And Socrates, like primitive paintings on a wall,
Look, with idiot eyes, on the world where we two are.

You, the sought for; I, the seeker; this, the search:
And each is the mission of all.

For greatness is only the drayhorse that coaxes
The built cart out; and where we go is reason.
But genius is an enormous littleness, a trickling
Of heart that covers alike the hare and the hunter.

How smoothly, like the sleep of a flower, love,
The grassy wind moves over night's tense meadow:
See how the great wooden eyes of the forest
Stare upon the architecture of our innocence.

You, the village; I, the stranger; this, the road:
And each is the work of all.

Then, not that man do more, or stop pity; but that he be
Wider in living; that all his cities fly a clean flag. . .
We have been alone too long, love; it is terribly late
For the pierced feet on the water and we must not die now.

Have you wondered why all the windows in heaven were
broken?

Have you seen the homeless in the open grave of God's hand?
Do you want to acquaint the larks with the fatuous music of
war?

There is the muffled step in the snow; the stranger;
The crippled wren; the nun; the dancer; the Jesus-wing

Over the walkers in the village; and there are
Many desperate arms about us and the things we know.

Continuation of the Landscape

Definite motion is accomplished
Where all seems fixed in the orderly molds
Of sight (through the mastery and knowledge
 of natural signs we can renew
 ourselves with an ancient innocence):
These forests have the sanctity of the quiet tides
Rolling over their green reaching, yet
They do not improve upon their real station,
Which is to grow as it was first decreed.
The white bird and the snail vary the world
By the exact condition of their being; only man
Would change his distance from that beautiful center;
Only man, undirected and naked, would run
From the creature which inhabits his kind.

That to this dark village, unsummoned, unattended
By guide or acclaim, with more joy than sorrow,
I come; is not without its moment on the clock
Of my endeavor. Only through losing our place
 in this overlapping circle of wombs,
 can we attain to that ultimate pattern
Where childhood selects its running wing and grave.



A queen with transparent breasts is found
On the slope of the black hill.
She has a flowing and a meaning
Which the distance dims.
Shape of head distorted by three long swinging poles
That seem to batter through her skull—
Though this may be more than the lances
Of her companions, who are obscured
By the way the air is torn across in that place.
In fact, this whole scene is frayed and indistinct,
Almost as if it had been too long in the world,
And seen by no one really to make it luminous.

A man made of water and a shoulder-high heart
Arc proceeding at a slow pace before.
Just behind come two pretty scintillating claws
Dressed as tavern maids, one of them
Riding on the horns of a small yellow wolf.
They are all intent on an object or ideal
Which seems to be harbored just above me.
The heart moves its head from side to side,
And in each of its eyes there is a tiny slit
Through which a cross looks.

'For Losing Her Love All Would I Profane'

For losing her love all would I profane
As a man who washes his heart in filth.
She wakes so whitely at my side,
Her two breasts like bowls of snow

Upon which I put my hands like players
In a child's story of heaven.

For gaining her love all would I protest
As a man who threatens God with murder.
Her lips part sleep's jewelled rain
Like little red boats on a Sunday lake.
I know nothing about men who die
Like beasts in a war-fouled ditch—
My sweetling . . .

O God what shall become of us?

'As We Are So Wonderfully Done with Each Other'

As we are so wonderfully done with each other
We can walk into our separate sleep
On floors of music where the milkwhite cloak of childhood
lies

Oh my love, my golden lark, my soft long doll
Your lips have splashed my dull house with print of flowers
My hands are crooked where they spilled over your dear
curving

It is good to be weary from that brilliant work
It is being God to feel your breathing under me

A waterglass on the bureau fills with morning . . .
Don't let anyone in to wake us

*HE WAS ALONE (AS IN REALITY) UPON HIS HUM-
BLE BED, when imagination brought to his ears the sound of
many voices again singing the slow and monotonous psalm
which was interrupted by the outcries of some unseen things
who attempted to enter his chamber, and, amid yells of fear
and execrations of anger, bade him "Arise and come forth and
aid;" then the confined form, which slept so quietly below,
stood by his side and in beseeching accents bade him "Arise
and save what is beautiful"*

Come back when fog drifts out over the city
And sleep puts her kind hands on all these poor devils

Come back when the policeman is in another street
And Beatrice will let you see her thin soul under the paint

Come back to the corner and tell them what brand of poison
you want
Ask them why your very own dear lady is always on the lay

Somebody will pick up the pieces, somebody will put you to
bed
You're a great guy, and she's the finest broad in all the world

Take it easy, partner, death is not such a bad chaser
And you didn't mix this one anyway

They were all right, the lot of them, it wasn't up to them
And they knew it; if somebody had come along and said
I've got a spot for a twolegged animal in the world I'm work-
ing on,
They wouldn't have made anything like they had been made.

They were wise that this man-business was just a matter
Of putting it in and taking it out, and that went all the way
From throwing up cathedrals to getting hot pants over Kathy.
Maybe there was something to get steamed about, maybe it was
Baseball to grow a beard and end up on a cross so that a lot
Of hysteria cases could have something to slap around;
Maybe the old Greek boy knew what he was doing when he
hemlocked

It out, loving the heels who hobbled him; maybe little French
Joan

Got a kick out of the English hot-foot; the boys at the corner
bar

Were willing to believe it. No skin off their noses. But what
was hard

Was when you got a snoot full and all you can think to say
starts with s

And you know damn well you're a good guy and you'll never
meet a dame

Who really has your address, who can really dot your t

Come back when it's old home week in this particular hell
And you can bum enough nickels to take the fallen angels out

I sat down and said beer thinking Scotch and there by God
Was my woman just as I had always known she would be
And I went over to her and she said come home with me
Like that, raining a bit, will you get wet? no, let's hurry,
Climbing the stairs behind her, watching; what's your name?
Lorraine, don't make so much noise, the landlady; buzz her I
said

Wondering how God could have gotten it all into this little
tail;

Key in the lock, light; hello, you're lovely did you know that?
She was all right, all of her, it was up to me and I knew it; let's
Talk first, do you mind? I said no and she said some female
stuff

Husband on the lam and I've never done this before tonight;
me, I

Put all my cards on the table and dealt myself five aces, great
God

I was wanting it then but she said some more things and started
To cry and I slammed on my coat and said you lousy bitch
which shut

Her up and I put my key in the lock

And when it's open, when you've got it, when it's all yours,
When nobody else in all the world is where you are,
When your arms have really gone around something,
When your thighs know all the answers to all the questions,
Why is there always one bead of sweat that doesn't come
from either of your faces?

Come back when sleep drifts out over the city
And the good God puts His hands on all these poor devils

My Generation Reading the Newspapers

We must be slow and delicate; return
the policeman's stare with some esteem,
remember this is not a shadow play
of doves and geese but this is now
the time to write it down, record the words—

I mean we should have left some pride
of youth and not forget the destiny of men
who say goodbye to the wives and homes
they've read about at breakfast in a restaurant:
"My love."—without regret or bitterness
obtain the measure of the stride we make,
the latest song has chosen a theme of love
delivering us from all evil—destroy . . . ?
why no . . . this too is fanciful . . . funny how
hard it is to be slow and delicate in this,
this thing of framing words to mark this grave
I mean nothing short of blood in every street
on earth can fitly voice the loss of these.

For the Mother of My Mother's Mother

Wind. Flower. Pretty village.

1847.

This is the autumn, Jenny.

Leaves scratch

The lowest star.

Green are the leaves, Jenny.

Pleasure in a warm young body . . .

Dogs snap

At the sullen moon.

Cruel are the dogs, Jenny.

They do their crazysad love

Over your sleeping face.

Snow. Rain. A bad world.

Jenny, my darling Jenny . . .
Black are the leaves that fall
On your grave.

*BEHOLD, ONE OF SEVERAL LITTLE CHRISTS, with
a curiously haunted ugly face, crouched beneath the first and
the last, embracing you in its horrible arms, blowing its fetid
breath in your face and using fearful threats of death and of
judgment*

Their war-boots said bigshots to the plank floor.

I am the timorous mouse, brother mortal, take aim
at my wee brown eye and you will hit William T. God.
Bring her in Leather Face said: he is my leader, a strong boy
And the dirt of many marches is on his soul; swarms of camp
fires

In the bush-country, lions like bastard druids, telling us
To come out and give them a taste, and the dust and the sand
When the water is gone and you wonder what you are there
for,

Not believing the stuff about flags after you have seen a man
dance

Rope-necked on a dirty platform and the pretty girls yelling
like mad

Moving their thighs as though Death were coming into them
too.

I am the crafty Caesar and my baby sister shall one day
be whore to all the world, tastefully gowned in your guts.
Beautiful my heart said when I saw her.
She was very young and everything good was in her face.
I could have been Christ if she had touched me.

Nail her to the door my leader said and they put knives
Through her hands and knives through her feet, but
I did not turn my face away

I am a singer of songs and there is no one
listening now

Flame of all the world, honor of the wounded tiger,
There is something that has not been said,
There is something that can not be said,
To The Word which is the girl who hangs here,
To the one upon whom her eyes now are
For her pain, for her innocence, for her pigeon-mouthed death
That coos and trills over the fogsweet deeps of her flesh,
For those who killed her and for the strange planet of her
dying,

For all the mockery of the just and for the battlements of salt
That man has against the howling dark
There is nothing, there is no voice, no quiet hand,
There is the sneer of the bat and the gull's fang,
There is a lobster beating his breast and singing,
Yea, singing, I am the answer to your prayer, sugar,
I am the one to come to your window in the first stinking
sweat

Of night and I shall bed thee down in star-manure,
A pot of green paint for thy Jerusalem, believe me,
Babe, till the seas gang gok my rod shall comfort thee

I am of the first thing and of the last thing

Mine is the face in your dream

Mine is the body beside you in the night

Why isn't she dead grumbled the leader

It was getting later than the night had room for

And the lanterns were beginning to look silly

(Birds pleading with something out in the swamp)

Our faces hunched over our brains like tight pods.
We looked again at the maps and a little stream of her blood
Had made a river that we had no fit equipment to cross
And her hand had fallen over the city that we hoped to take
Her hair went over us praying here all of us not the least
Nor the greatest not the pure alone but those who are most
bent
On murder the evil more than the good over the lost and the
hunted
Over the gambler and the bitch followed by the whole human
pack

Written After Reading an Item in the Paper
About a Young Lady Who Went Mad upon
Forsaking Her Lover. He is Here Assumed
to Speak

Our chief amusement was to lie naked
In a little clearing deep within the forest.
There, while the things of fur and wing
Disported themselves about us, we lay
Together in peace and joy, our mouths
Completing what our voices could not tell.
We had no thought to enter the Anthian cave,
Which the repeated warnings of the wood folk
Had made sinister and unholy.
This was the place of love O cry cry air
Water earth fields birds and the calling
Of the wild swan O how we were taken
Into the green halls

Into the beautiful green halls where God dwelt.
This was the throne of song O fill fill her heart
Breast arms lips eyes and the falling
Of her golden hair O how I was tried
By that haunting flood
By that falling of love's swift unquenchable whips.
Within her queenly land I knew my wanton home.
Fair were the deeds of our revels, a pageantry
Of glory the acts of our two souls—we drank
The waters of fire, twisting upon a whirling sun,
And were drowned. In place of monuments
We built honor itself; and she instead of ornament
Had fashioned gowns for Beauty to wear.



The awesome houses of earth's innocents . . .



O my lords and ladies, pain walks upon my land . . .
Little snake, little snake, what a pretty pair
We make

I am thirsty! I am heavy with my stone!
That was the place of love O cry cry stars
Rain night snow death and the calling
Of the stained creature O how we were tortured
By that sublime beast
By that tongueless Horror which dwelt in the cave.
For you grew tired of our love.
Hovering in the air above heaven,
You dived down drunken with our constellations . . .
Because you grew tired of all the common mysteries,

Because you grew tired of love itself.
Not heeding the warnings of the wood folk,
You went into the cave. O cry cry my heart
Throat hands tongue spirit and the killing
Of my awesome house O how you were tested
By that murder
By that long murder which in killing love killed thee.
For I have nearly forgotten thy deeps;
Almost am I able to pass that mocking place
Without running a knife through my heart.
You were my only house O cry cry Horror
Be kind to her in your cave

'For Whose Adornment'

For whose adornment the mouths
Of roses open in languorous speech;
And from whose grace the trees of heaven
Learn their white standing

(I must go now to cash in the milk bottles
So I can phone somebody
For enough money for our supper.)

'Of the Same Beauty Were Stars Made'

Of the same beauty were stars made
That they might guide their earthly sister

When she undertook the white still journey
Into the country of His gentle keeping.

To a Certain Section of Our Population

It is ordered now
That you push your beliefs
Up out of the filth high enough
For the inchworm to get their measure.

May I Ask You a Question, Mr. Youngstown Sheet & Tube?

Mean grimy houses, shades drawn
Against the yellow-brown smoke
That blows in
Every minute of every day. And
Every minute of every night. To bake a cake or have a baby,
With the taste of tar in your mouth. To wash clothes or fix
supper,
With the taste of tar in your mouth. Ah, but the grand
funerals . . .
Rain hitting down
On the shiny hearses. "And it's a fine man he was, such a comfort
To his old ma,—Struck cold in the flower of his youth." Bedrooms

Gray-dim with the rumor of old sweat and urine. Pot roasts
And boiled spuds; *Ranch Romances* and The Bleeding Heart
Of Our Dear Lord—"Be a good lad . . . run down to Tim's
And get this wee pail filled for your old father now." The kids
Come on like the green leaves in the spring, but I'm not spry
Anymore and the missus do lose the bloom from her soft
cheek.

(And of a Saturday night then, in Tim O'Sullivan's Elite
Tavern itself:

"It is a world of sadness we live in, Micky boy."

"Aye, that it is. And better we drink to that."

"This one more, for home is where I should be now."

"Aye, but where's the home for the soul of a man!"

"It's a frail woman ye act like, my Micky."

"And it be a dumb goose who hasn't a tear to shed this night.")

Rain dripping down from a rusty evespout
Into the gray-fat cinders of the millyard . . .
The dayshift goes on in four minutes.

The Climate of War

Therefore the constant powers do not lessen;
Nor is the property of the spirit scattered
On the cold hills of these events.
Through what is heavy into what is only light,
Man accumulates his original mastery
—Which is to be one with that gentle substance
Out of which the flowers take breath.

That which is given in birth
Is taken to purer beginnings.
The combats of this world
Rise only upward, since death
Is not man's creature, but God's . . .
And he can gain nothing by manipulating
That which is already hidden in himself.
The sources of nature are not concerned
In peoples, or in battlefields; nor are they mindful
Of the intensity with which man extinguishes his kind.
He who can give light to the hidden
May alone speak of victories.
He who can come to his own formulation
Shall be found to assume mastery
Over the roads which lead
On the whole human event.

The hour of love and dignity and peace
Is surely not dead.
With more splendor than these sombre lives
The gates within us
Open on the brilliant gardens of the sun.
Then do these inscrutable soldiers rise upward,
Nourished and flowering
On the battleslopes of the Unseen. For Victory,
Unlike the sponsored madness in these undertakings,
Is not diminished by what is mortal; but on its peaks
Grows until the dark caverns are alight
With the ordained radiance of all mankind.

THE IMPATIENT EXPLORER

INVENTS
A BOX IN WHICH
ALL JOURNEYS
MAY BE KEPT



Street Corner College

Next year the grave grass will cover us.
We stand now, and laugh;
Watching the girls go by;
Betting on slow horses; drinking cheap gin.
We have nothing to do; nowhere to go; nobody.

Last year was a year ago; nothing more.
We weren't younger then; nor older now.

We manage to have the look that young men have;
We feel nothing behind our faces, one way or other.

We shall probably not be quite dead when we die.
We were never anything all the way; not even soldiers.

We are the insulted, brother, the desolate boys.
Sleepwalkers in a dark and terrible land,
Where solitude is a dirty knife at our throats.
Cold stars watch us, chum
Cold stars and the whores

Credit to Paradise

The golden blood of the sun
Floods down in splendid abandon;
And what is full of dread
Dreams within the heart—for look,
We expect most from what we fear.

Even in this sun, which spreads its glorious
Image on our lives, is only caught
Again by the great frozen hand
Which tossed it forth. For think,
Wouldn't it be more a sun
If just once it could elude Him? If just once
It missed the relentless fingers?

The great can be little.
The fun of being God would be
In being nothing;
To really live, we should be dead too.
Isn't all our dread a dread of being
Just here? of being only this?
Of having no other thing to become?
Of having nowhere to go really
But where we are?

What power has the sun
If it must remain the sun?
We are afraid that one day the hand
Will not catch us when we come;
That the remorseless fingers will not close over us.

And I think that is our strongest will—
The reason all our dreams of paradise
Are dreams of an unlimited disorder
In a lawless anonymity.

Birthday Greetings for W. C. (hurchill) and His Pals

Beings so hideous that the air weeps blood
And the forehead of God shrivels,
Advance toward us.
Smiling, they hand Mrs. Buell a tin pail
Of soldier's livers and slayweed.

Mrs. Buell looks hopefully at Alfred.
"Tell me, dear, what are we to do now?"
"Just sit tight until the soul plasma gets here."

Lubby Stevers grins. He lifts his right leg
And squirts all over Christ.
"I am a gentleman, I am—an Imperial
Gentleman, that's me."

"Here's one we haven't killed yet," Jake Joel exclaims
Happily. "Let's pull his
You-know-what off first, though."
"Oh, goodie, goodie," cried Harry, "it'll make
Such a nice trinket for my missus."

Ah! a noble work is man . . .
Ah! a noble day for the Civilized Nations . . .

But I'd advise you to sit pretty tight
Until the soul plasma gets here.

The Cloth of the Tempest

These of living emanate a formidable light,
Which is equal to death, and when used
Gives increase eternally.
What fortifies in separate thought
Is not drawn by wind or by man defiled.
So whispers the parable of doubleness.
As it is necessary not to submit
To power which weakens the hidden forms;
It is extraordinarily more essential
Not to deny welcome to these originating forces
When they gather within our heat
To give us habitation.
The one life must be attempted with the other,
That we may embark upon the fiery work
For which we were certainly made.

What has been separated from the mother,
Must again be joined; for we were born of spirit,
And to spirit all mortal things return,
As it is necessary in the method of earth.
So sings the parable of singleness.
My comforter does not conceal his face;
I have seen appearances that were not marshalled
By sleep.

Perhaps I am to be stationed
At the nets which move through this completing sea.
Or I have hunting on my sign.

Yet the ground is visible,
The center of our seeing. (The houses rest

Like sentinels on this hawking star.
Two women are bathing near a trestle;
Their bodies dress the world in golden birds;
The skin of their throats is a dancing flute . . .
How alter or change? How properly
Find an exact equation? What is flying
Anywhere that is more essential to our quest?
Even the lake . . . boat walking on its blue streets;
Organ of thunder muttering in the sky . . . A tiger
Standing on the edge of a plowed field . . .
What is necessary? What is inseparable to know?
The children seek silvery-pretty caves . . .
What are we to teach?)
The distance is not great
To worlds of magnificent joy or nowhere.

Have You Killed Your Man for Today?

In these hands, the cities; in my weather, the armies
Of better things than die
To the scaly music of war.

The different men, who are dead,
Had cunning; they sought green lives
In a world blacker than your world;
But you have nourished the taste of sickness
Until all other tastes are dull in your mouths;
It is only we who stand outside the steaming tents
Of hypocrisy and murder
Who are 'sick'—

This is the health you want.

Yours is the health of the pig which roots up
The vines that would give him food;
Ours is the sickness of the deer which is shot
Because it is the activity of hunters to shoot him.

In your hands, the cities; in my world, the marching
Of nobler feet than walk down a road
Deep with the corpses of every sane and beautiful thing.

Nice Day for a Lynching

The bloodhounds look like sad old judges
In a strange court. They point their noses
At the Negro jerking in the tight noose;
His feet spread crow-like above these
Honorable men who laugh as he chokes.

I don't know this black man.
I don't know these white men.

But I know that one of my hands
Is black, and one white. I know that
One part of me is being strangled,
While another part horribly laughs.

Until it changes,
I shall be forever killing; and be killed.

Fog

Rain's lovely gray daughter has lost her tall lover.
He whose mouth she knew; who was good to her.

I've heard her talk of him when the river lights
Scream 'Christ! it's lonely; Christ! it's cold.'

Heard the slug cry of her loneliness calling him
When the ship's mast points to no star in the North.

Many men have thought they were he;
Feeling her cold arms as they held death in theirs—

The woman-face in the frame of nothingness;
As the machinery of sleep turned its first wheel;

And they slept, while angels fell in colored sound
Upon the closing waters. Child and singing cradle one.

O sorrowful lady whose lover is that harbor
In a heaven where all we of longing lie, clinging together
as it gets dark.

23rd Street Runs into Heaven

You stand near the window as lights wink
On along the street. Somewhere a trolley, taking
Shop-girls and clerks home, clatters through
This before-supper Sabbath. An alley cat cries
To find the garbage cans sealed; newsboys
Begin their murder-into-pennies round.

We are shut in, secure for a little, safe until
Tomorrow. You slip your dress off, roll down
Your stockings, careful against runs. Naked now,
With soft light on soft flesh, you pause
For a moment; turn and face me—
Smile in a way that only women know
Who have lain long with their lover
And are made more virginal.

Our supper is plain but we are very wonderful.

There Is One Who Watches

The heavens sway at his touch,
Dropping blue pennies
Into the hand of summer.
The ears of the lark alone hear his singing.
Those who love have his waking
When their bodies are fed.
On the edge of the world
Stands his unending house.
All who have waited in the darkness
Are there shone a flowering light.
Manifest in his pattern are the crowns of destiny,
And he has speech direct with God.
Dressed in the white hoods of his anger,
Terrible soldiers empty winter on the earth.
Beneath him the wells of hair
Cloud with the warm juice of suicides;
And the splendor of all creatures is polished

By the tinkling ghost whom men call death.
All beside him nestle the eternal Guardians,
Whose kingdom is the shading of a leaf
Or the clanging open of a grave.

Can the Harp Shoot Through Its Propellers?

And I had it neatly written

*this is the secret
of your earth: this is its one greener tree;
its only deep sky*

nicely settled—holding it
The way a lover is held; stubborn of its lack
Of shame—but, a blind man, passing
In great haste, bumped my arm and gave
My words upon the dusty wind

And I stand here silent now while all the breath
Of the damn beasts snuffs about my empty hands,
Not knowing that the fashion of my art
Could not design a submarine or bomb a city.

Eve of St. Agony or The Middleclass Was Sitting on Its Fat

Man-dirt and stomachs that the sea unloads; rockets
of quick lice crawling inland, planting their damn flags,
putting their malethings in any hole that will stand still,

yapping bloody murder while they slice off each other's heads,
spewing themselves around, priesting, whoring, lording
it over little guys, messing their pants, writing gush-notes
to their grandmas, wanting somebody to do something pronto,
wanting the good thing right now and the bad stuff for the
other boy.

Gullet, praise God for the gut with the patented zipper;
sing loud for the lads who sell ice boxes on the burning deck.
Dear reader, gentle reader, dainty little reader, this is
the way we go round the milktrucks and seamusic, Sike's trap
and Meg's rib,

the wobbly sparrow with two strikes on the bible, behave
Alfred, your pokus is out; I used to collect old ladies,
pickling them in brine and painting mustaches on their bellies,
later I went in for stripteasing before Save Democracy Clubs;
when the joint was raided we were all caught with our pants
down.

But I will say this: I like butter on both sides of my bread
and my sister can rape a Hun any time she's a mind to,
or the Yellow Peril for that matter; Hector, your papa's in
the lobby.

The old days were different; the ball scores meant something
then,

two pill in the side pocket and two bits says so; he got up
slow see,
shook the water out of his hair, wam, tell me that ain't a sweet
left hand;

I told her what to do and we did it, Jesus I said, is your name
McCoy?

Maybe it was the beer or because she was only sixteen but I
got hoarse

just thinking about her; married a john who travels in cotton underwear.

Now you take today; I don't want it. Wessex, who was that with I saw you lady?

Tony gave all his dough to the church; Lizzie believed in feeding her own face;

and that's why you'll never meet a worm who isn't an anti-christ, my friend,

I mean when you get down to a brass tack you'll find some sucker sitting on it.

Whereas. Muckle's whip and Jessie's rod, boyo, it sure looks black

in the gut of this particular whale. Hilda, is that a .38 in your handbag?

Ghosts in packs like dogs grinning at ghosts
Pocketless thieves in a city that never sleeps
Chains clank, warders curse, this world is stark mad

Hey! Fatty, don't look now but that's a Revolution breathing down your neck.

'There Is Nothing False in Thee'

There is nothing false in thee.
In thy heat the youngest body
Has warmth and light.
In thee the quills of the sun
Find adornment.

What does not die
Is with thee.

Thou art clothed in robes of music.
Thy voice awakens wings.

And still more with thee
Are the flowers of earth made bright.

Upon thy deeps the fiery sails
Of heaven glide.

Thou art the radiance and the joy.
Thy heart shall only fail
When all else has fallen.

What does not perish
Lives in thee.

'Rest, Heart of the Tired World'

Rest, heart of the tired world.
Hush . . . go to sleep.
Men and cities keep their cold terrible watches,
And the ocean frets at these naked lands of pain.
O hushabye . . . and go to sleep.

This red rain . . .
To breathe . . .
To weep . . .

To love where only murder has been lain . . .
To find youth, and faith, and all their quick kin,
Buried deep in talking halls of horror . . .

No.

It is that we cannot see,
That we cannot hear,
That we cannot smell,
Or taste, or feel, or think;
For surely no will in heaven or earth
Could endure what we seem to possess;
We live in the shadow of a greater shadow—
But there is the sun!
And from him man shall have life,
And he shall have redress from the crimes
Of his most brutal habitation . . .

O rest, heart of the tired world.
Hush . . . and go to sleep.
There is a beautiful work for all men to do,
And we shall at last wake into the sun.

How God Was Made

On the first day

A weed led her young to drink at Eternity
but there was only one hanging eye
that withered them with its look

on the second day

A wondrous hand fashioned a bubble
and the stars sang
His branching head awake

on the third day

His heart began to beat
and the heavens foamed along their gathering roads
where the mad and the dead would walk

on the fourth day

His ribs bent around the air
and the pillars of nothingness toppled down
to become roosts for the birds that foul dreams

on the fifth day

His body stirred upon the sun
and the fiery kingdoms raised their flags
that would be lifting over us forever

on the sixth day

His mouth breathed the first word
and all the things of wonder and pain and beauty
were made ready for the poor flesh of man

on the seventh day

His sweeping eye saw what had been done
and moved into the great, gentle face
where not even God could see its terror

Pastoral

The dove walks with sticky feet
Upon the green crowns of the almond tree,
Its feathers smeared over the warmth
Like honey
That drips lazily down into the shadow . . .

Anyone standing in that orchard,
So filled with peace and sleep,
Would hardly have noticed the hill
Nearby
With its three strange wooden arms
Lifted above a throng of motionless people
—Above the helmets of Pilate's soldiers
Flashing like silver teeth in the sun.

Now I Went Down to the Ringside and Little
Henry Armstrong Was There

They've got some pretty horses up in the long dark mountains.
Get him, boy!

They've got some nifty riders away yonder on that big sad
road.
Get him, boy!

They've got some tall talk off in that damn fine garden.
Get him, boy!

When you can't use your left, then let the right go.
When your arms get tired, hit him with a wing.
When you can't see very good, smell where he is.

They've got some juicy steaks in that nice sweet by-and-by.
Get him, boy!

They've got a lot of poor black lads in that crummy old jail-house.
Get him, boy!

O they've got a lot of clean bunks up in their big wide blue sky.
That's his number, boy!

Boxers Hit Harder When Women Are Around

The sleeping face folds down over this human country
And a battle crackles through the fat, blue air above us.

Rock-a-bye poor ladies, the world was ever cruel and
wrong. . .
And while you sleep, be sure your sons will make a mess of
something.

Ho! ho! my hovering leopard. Ho! my hungry dogs. . .
Inspect my savage house;
Here the moth-bladed light stabs at fake, lancing remote lies.

Do they stir in their troubled sleep?
Somebody will always look out for my poor ladies. . .
Rock-a-bye my darlings, the world won't always be wrong.

The sleeping face folds down over the broken harlot
Who stands behind the plough unshakeable,
Bewildered as all the bells in the world thunder
Against the castles where chained tigers await
The tread of the Huntsman from whose hand they will feed,
From whose desperate heart will flower a manflame honor.

Who fights the gunclan will wear hard gloves and come out
fighting. . .
And it won't seem so lonesome when the lights are all on.

The Poor Child with the Hooked Hands

He leads me into much that is sorrow
For his name might have been mine

He comes like a dead thing giving
Pennies that I would place upon the eyes
Of those who live in private horror
And all the rooms in them haunted by war

He calls for a lovely woman to take him
To arms where the tired may lean as though home
Were a woman's arms about him and it never dark or lonely

Because his hands are hooked and ugly
And someone will surely want to put nails through them
As though there were any wood to hold the hell of him
Who had been a wilderness where something very beautiful
Got lost and wandered away as beautiful things always do

Death Will Amuse Them

A little girl was given a new toy
That needed no winding and would never run down
As even the best of everything will

And all day she played with it
Following happily over the floor of heaven
Until finally it rolled to the feet of God Himself

Who said: 'You must give it back now.'
Then He pointed down at two soldiers who were staring up
Hopefully

'You see, it is a very popular toy.'
And He tossed it down to them
Whose eyes would stare up in earnest when they touched it.

In Memory of Kathleen

How pitiful is her sleep.
Now her clear breath is still.
There is nothing falling tonight,
Bird or man,
As dear as she;
Nowhere that she should go
Without me. None but my calling.
Nothing but the cold cry of the snow.

How lonely does she seem,
I, who have no heaven,
Defenseless, without lands,
Must try a dream
Of the seven
Lost stars and how they put their hands
Upon her eyes that she might ever know
Nothing worse than the cold cry of snow.

The Deer and the Snake

The deer is humble, lovely as God made her
I watch her eyes and think of wonder owned

These strange priests enter the cathedral of woods
And seven Marys clean their hands to woo her

Foot lifted, dagger-sharp—her ears
Poised to their points like a leaf's head

But the snake strikes, in a velvet arc
Of murderous speed—assassin beautiful

As mountain water at which a fawn drank
Stand there, forever, while poison works

While I stand counting the arms of your Cross
Thinking that many Christs could hang there, crying.

Religion Is That I Love You

As time will turn our bodies straight
In single sleep, the hunger fed, heart broken
Like a bottle used by thieves

Beloved, as so late our mouths meet, leaning
Our faces close, eyes closed
Out there

outside this window where branches toss
in soft wind, where birds move sudden wings
Within that lame air, love, we are dying

Let us watch that sleep come, put our fingers
Through the breath falling from us

Living, we can love though dying comes near
It is its desperate singing that we must not hear

It is that we cling together, not dying near each other now

The Soldier and the Star

Rifle goes up:
Does what a rifle does.

Star is very beautiful:
Doing what a star does.

Tell them, O Sleeper, that some
Were slain at the start of the slaughter

Tell them, O Sleeper, that sleet and rain
Are falling on those poor riderless heads

Tell them, O Sleeper, that pitiful hands float on the water. . .
Hands that shall reach icily into their warm beds.

The State of the Nation

Understand that they were sitting just inside the door
At a little table with two full beers and two empties.
There were a few dozen people moving around, killing
Time and getting tight because nothing meant anything
Anymore

Somebody looked at a girl and somebody said

Great things doing in Spain

But she didn't even look up, not so much as half an eye.

Then Jack picked up his beer and Nellie her beer
And their legs ground together under the table.

Somebody looked at the clock and somebody said

Great things doing in Russia

A cop and two whores came in and he bought only two drinks
Because one of them had syphilis

No one knew just why it happened or whether
It would happen ever again on this fretful earth
But Jack picked up his beer again and Nellie her beer again
And, as though at signal, a little man hurried in,
Crossed to the bar and said Hello Steve to the barkeeper.

All the Bright Foam of Talk

Followed by garrulous hunters, the soft children grovel
Down the valley of sleep . . . so gentle . . . shining . . . but
Not singing
Never singing . . . it is the midnight of sense . . . mind's
Desolate cave

The decayed clock booms out in puffs of sound
That stagger like drunken apes through the streets,
Fingering the paint-stripped houses and the wood
Where death has flung all things beautiful

Watch the fantastic eyelid of that lark
How enormously lovely . . . hooded like an invisible engine
and pulling earth's lustful plow right through the lark

The children do not remember the slow step of the mules
As they descended the hills lost in the snow
Knowing that there was no room in the inn
Where death has flung all things beautiful

There is laggard talk on the islands
Clatter of spoons as people stuff their bones
Mating in the slums and cheap movies
Fine hands folded over the tin cross where man tosses

There is no track before me, no light in the inn
At all . . . no fiery map nor singing . . . I cannot join the
past
Who can never see as the lark does and think even in sleep

*BUT THE IMAGES OF HIS FORMER DREAMS STILL
HAUNTED HIM, and their hideous phantoms were more
powerfully renewed: again he heard the awful singing of
death, but unsung by mortals, being pealed through earth up
to the high heaven by throngs of the viewless and the mighty:
again he heard the wailing of the millions for some remem-
bered sin, and the wrath and the hatred of a world was rush-
ing in on him*

Hasten to your own gun, to your own star, to your own tribe,
Hurry while the light lasts, while still you need someone;
I don't trust this quiet, I don't like that grave over there.

Is it only death that bothers you?
So many have done it, brother.
So many have turned up their poor toes.

Is it only war that blackens you?
So many have gone there, brother.
So many have taken that boney grin.

Is it only blood that sickens you?
So many have bathed in it, brother.
So many are standing knee-deep there now.

Is it only God that heartens you?
So many have gone blind, brother.
So many have put their eyes in His cunning hock.

Is it only Man that frightens you?
So many have been fooled, brother.
So many hold that key, and that beautiful lock.

Hasten to your own kind, to your own dream, to your own
land;
Hurry while there is still someone to go with you there . . .

*THE FIGURE MOTIONED WITH ITS MANGLED
HAND TOWARDS THE WALL BEHIND IT, and
uttered a melancholy cry*

It was rumored on the block
Ethel is going to let go tonight.
I made big about it, strutting
Down 5th eyeing the babies over,
Thinking they look like mudhens
Next to my little piece of tail.
She was hard to get. Her old lady
Was saving her for dough, but hell
I had class, want the moon, kid?
And I'd give it to her. Funny thing
Though, this is all a lie, I never
So much as touched her hand, she
Thinks I'm dirt, nobody else ever
Always got the wrong end of the stick.
I'd carry the mail for you, Ethel,
Stop running around with that pup,
He's got a car, sure, and jack to throw
Like water but what does he want?
What do they all want? something easy,
Something that somebody else worked for.
Ethel, lay off rich kids, you'll end dirty.

*Join the world and see the army
The slime is quiet tonight, along the Jersey coast*
—

*The chippies discuss Democracy in awed tones
Breathes there a heel with man so dead . . .
Shoot the liquid fire to Johnnie, boy
With every rendezvous-with-death we are giving away
An autographed photo of J. P. Morgan taken in the frontline
trenches*

They took him down stone steps
To a cellar thick with rats.
The guard gave him a cigarette
And slapped it out of his mouth.
Moral. Don't ever knock off a cop.
Ethel, looking like a movie queen,
Descended on his cell in a mink coat.
When they fitted the black cap over his head
He knew that he'd never have another chance to be president.

*AVARICE AND AMBITION ONLY WERE THE FIRST
BUILDERS OF TOWNS AND FOUNDERS OF EMPIRE;
They said, go to, let us build us a city and a tower whose top
may reach unto Heaven, and let us make us a name, lest we be
scattered abroad upon the face of the earth (Genesis XI: 4).
What was the beginning of this city? What was it but a con-
course of thieves, and a sanctuary of criminals? It was justly
named by the augury of no less than twelve vultures, and the
founder cemented his walls with the steaming blood of his
only brother. Not unlike to this was the beginning even of the
first town in the world, and such is the original sin of most
cities: Their actual increase daily with their age and growth;
the more people, the more wicked all of them; everyone
brings in his part to inflame the contagion, which becomes at
last so universal and so strong, that no precepts can be suffi-*

*cient preservatives, nor anything secure our safety, but flight
from among the infected. To spread our own disease*

They scatter me from church to gutter.
They smear their doings over my hands.
I am lifted out of wombs
And never put back anywhere . . .
I look up from the grass and down from the cathedral.
They honor me with the stuff of dogs.
They place my body down and fill themselves.
I smile from the confessional and frown on the battlemount.
They offer me their wives
And kill my firstborn . . .
I am grown in their hovels like a vegetable that can be eaten.
They won't wash off my dirt.
They put me in parades and distribute pieces of my corpse.
They honor me with statues and seal me in the hardening
mold.
I could never build a man
And I have come here to worship . . .
I have only this one wreath.
There is only one grave anywhere.
I am standing open.
You must not lower your eyes.
I want them all to know me.
I want my breath to go over them.
They should withhold nothing from me.
I am a respecter of dirt.
This is your house, you say. Then show
Yourself! I have not been on earth
Long enough to know about you. This

Collection of ills and organs means nothing
To me. Everybody gets a whack at them.
Tell me what you do inside there. I want
All your pain. I want to walk around where
You are. There is no war between us.

And every now and again somebody sneaks up and
Boots the hell out of you
But I could never build one of these curious things
And I have come here because of that simplicity

Is it so very dark in there, brothers?
Does it hurt all the time?
Does it rain without any end at all?
Are the same monsters in your streets?
Why have you nailed up your doors, brothers?
And every now and again something looks down and
Smears the doings of God over our murderous hands

I should like to pray now if I can stay out of a trench to do it
There is no war between us, brothers.
There is only one war anywhere.

'Be Music, Night'

Be music, night,
That her sleep may go
Where angels have their pale tall choirs

Be a hand, sea,
That her dreams may watch
Thy guidesman touching the green flesh of the world

Be a voice, sky,
That her beauties may be counted
And the stars will tilt their quiet faces
Into the mirror of her loveliness

Be a road, earth,
That her walking may take thee
Where the towns of heaven lift their breathing spires

O be a world and a throne, God,
That her living may find its weather
And the souls of ancient bells in a child's book
Shall lead her into Thy wondrous house

What Is the Beautiful?

The narrowing line.
Walking on the burning ground.
The ledges of stone.

Owlfish wading near the horizon.
Unrest in the outer districts.

Pause.

And begin again.
Needles through the eye.
Bodies cracked open like nuts.
Must have a place.
Dog has a place.

Pause.

And begin again.
Tents in the sultry weather.
Rifles hate holds.
Who is right?
Was Christ?
Is it wrong to love all men?

Pause.

And begin again.
Contagion of murder.
But the small whip hits back.
This is my life, Caesar.
I think it is good to live.

Pause.

And begin again.
Perhaps the shapes will open.

Will flying fly?
Will singing have a song?
Will the shapes of evil fall?
Will the lives of men grow clean?
Will the power be for good?
Will the power of man find its sun?
Will the power of man flame as a sun?
Will the power of man turn against death?
Who is right?
Is war?

Pause.

And begin again.
A narrow line.
Walking on the beautiful ground.
A ledge of fire.
It would take little to be free.
That no man hate another man,
Because he is black;
Because he is yellow;
Because he is white;
Or because he is English;
Or German;
Or rich;
Or poor;
Because we are everyman.

Pause.

And begin again.
It would take little to be free.

That no man live at the expense of another.
Because no man can own what belongs to all.
Because no man can kill what all must use.
Because no man can lie when all are betrayed.
Because no man can hate when all are hated.

And begin again.
I know that the shapes will open.
Flying will fly, and singing will sing.
Because the only power of man is in good.
And all evil shall fail.
Because evil does not work,
Because the white man and the black man,
The Englishman and the German,
Are not real things.
They are only pictures of things.
Their shapes, like the shapes of the tree
And the flower, have no lives in names or signs;
They are their lives, and the real is in them.
And what is real shall have life always.

Pause.

I believe in the truth.
I believe that every good thought I have,
All men shall have.
I believe that what is best in me,
Shall be found in every man.
I believe that only the beautiful
Shall survive on the earth.

I believe that the perfect shape of everything
Has been prepared;

And, that we do not fit our own
Is of little consequence.
Man beckons to man on this terrible road.
I believe that we are going into the darkness now;
Hundreds of years will pass before the light
Shines over the world of all men . . .
And I am blinded by its splendor.

Pause.

And begin again

The Dimensions of the Morning

Furtively sounding
In the high
Halls of God, the voice which is
Life begins to sing.
You will listen O you will not be afraid
To listen . . .
All these do:
The wolf, the fengy, the bear, the wide
Fish; and the deer, the silky rat, the snail,
The onises—even the goat
That waves his funny tail at trains
Is listening.
Do you now faintly
Hear the voice of life?
I will allow you respect for
Red apples and countries warm

With the races of men; peep over
The transom at China if you like;
But I will have no hatred or fear
Entering this poem.

It is big
Inside a man.
It is soft and beautiful
In him.
Water and the lands of the earth
Meet there.
I hand you a mountain.
I take the word Europe
Or the word death
And tear them into tiny pieces;
I scatter them at your feet.

Hand me a star.
Take me to a new city.
You are wasting your lives.
You are going along with your pockets
Full of trash.
You have been taught to want only the ugly
And the small;
You have been taught to hate what is clean
And of the star.
A dog will throw up
When he is sick;
Are you lower than dogs
That you keep it all down—
And cram more in?

The voice which is life
Shall sound over all the earth,
And over all who lie deep
In its green arms—
Go you to lie there as a fool, or as a child,
Tired from his beautiful playing,
To fall happily asleep?

“And When Freedom Is Achieved . . .”

You have used a word
Which means nothing.
You have given a word
The power to send men to death.
Men are not free who are sent to die.
Only those who send them are ‘free.’
You should have freedom stuffed down your fat throats.

The Unfulfilling Brightnesses

Thy servant I am
Immortal are thy lion-drunk deeps

As a flower thinks
So am I one with thee

Thou art my acquaintance
In the unlevel light

I am falling to sleep
In thy slaying forms

Where goeth the white wind
I have been
And believe

Mohammed

And to the kings of the world,
My greeting . . .
The Kaaba shall be thrown into the sea.

These are the dusty little streets of Medina.
Here my people live.
They are poor;
But riches wait in the One True God.
All men are one man in His wisdom.

My wives have soft breasts.
Their hair smells of my sweat.
I place my hands upon their eyes
And they know my hands; what
Is kind in them, what blackened
By my greed and cunning. For
I am a man of thirsts and hungers.

And to the great of the world,
My greeting . . .
The temples of God glow through the night.

HOW TO BE AN ARMY



MANY SHOES



POTATOES



FLAGS & FLEAS



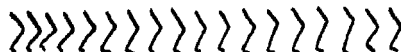
RIFLES



TRENCHES



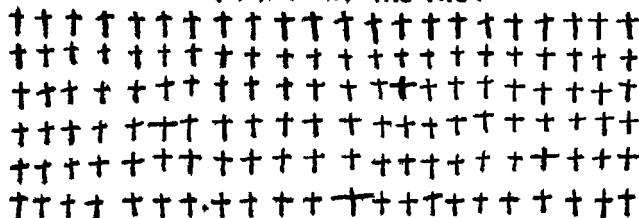
DETERMINATION



KNOWLEDGE OF MARCHING

$$\begin{array}{r} 58207 \\ \hline 27850 \end{array} = \text{BLOOD} \\ + (\text{GENERALS})$$

AND A FAITH IN THE RIGHT



Gautama in the Deer Park at Benares

In a hut of mud and fire
Sits this single man—"Not to want
Money, to want a life in the world,
To want no trinkets on my name"—
And he was rich; his life lives where
Death cannot go; his honor stares
At the sun.

The fawn sleeps. The little winds
Ruffle the earth's green hair. It is
Wonderful to live. My sword rusts
In the pleasant rain. I shall not think
Anymore. I touch the face of my friend;
He shows his dirty teeth as he scratches
At a flea—and we grin. It is warm
And the rice stirs usefully in our bellies.

The fawn raises its head—the sun floods
Its soft eye with the kingdoms of life—
I think we should all go to sleep now,
And not care anymore.

The Man with the Golden Adam's Apple

There were four crates of chickens
Hanging from the topmost bough
Of an elm tree near the fairgrounds;
A Mack truck with a badly damaged fender

Was just pulling to a stop across the road,
When a lightly-clad old lady, her shawl
Draped like a tired wing, and with hip-boots
Of bright yellow fur on her shrivelled-up legs,
Suddenly transformed herself into a shepherd boy,
And went crazy-running off over the horizon.
At that precise moment a door opened in the sky,
And the man with the golden adam's apple
Stepped briskly down.

The driver of the Mack backed into a turnoff,
Gunned her up so hard she blew the muffler,
And then slouched limp at the big wheel,
A tiny black hole appearing 'as if by magic'
In the middle of his forehead.
T m w t g a a holstered his deadly automatic,
Swore softly, and taking out a purple bandana,
Removed something from the crown of his Homborg.
He did not even then look up at the chickens;
Instead, being a fellow with a keen sense of proportion,
And mindful ever of his responsibility to society,
He built a fire and set up light-housekeeping in it.

'O My Darling Troubles Heaven with her
Loveliness'

O my darling troubles heaven
With her loveliness

She is made of such cloth
That the angels cry to see her

Little gods dwell where she moves
And their hands open golden boxes
For me to lie in

She is built of lilies and candy doves
And the youngest star wakens in her hair

She calls me with the music of silver bells
And at night we step into other worlds
Like birds flying through the red and yellow air
Of childhood

O she touches me with the tips of wonder
And the angels cuddle like sleepy kittens
At our side

The Lions of Fire Shall Have Their Hunting

The lions of fire
Shall have their hunting in this black land

Their teeth shall tear at your soft throats
Their claws kill

O the lions of fire shall awake
And the valleys steam with their fury

Because you are sick with the dirt of your money
Because you are pigs rooting in the swill of your war
Because you are mean and sly and full of the pus of your
 pious murder
Because you have turned your faces from God
Because you have spread your filth everywhere

O the lions of fire
Wait in the crawling shadows of your world
And their terrible eyes are watching you

A Vision for the People of America

The poets with death on their tongues
shall come to address you.

*The fat nonsense will end.
You will drown in your rot.*

The poets with death on their tongues
shall come to address you.

*The slimy hypocrisy will end.
You will go down in your filth.*

O the poets with death on their tongues
shall come to address you.

